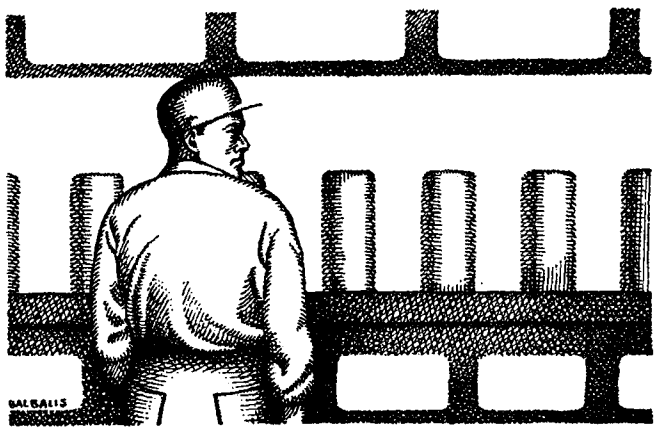
GALLISMO: THE SECRET UNDERSTANDING
– Gunnar D. Kumlien

THE

Commonweal

The Robot Revolution
Geoffrey Ashe



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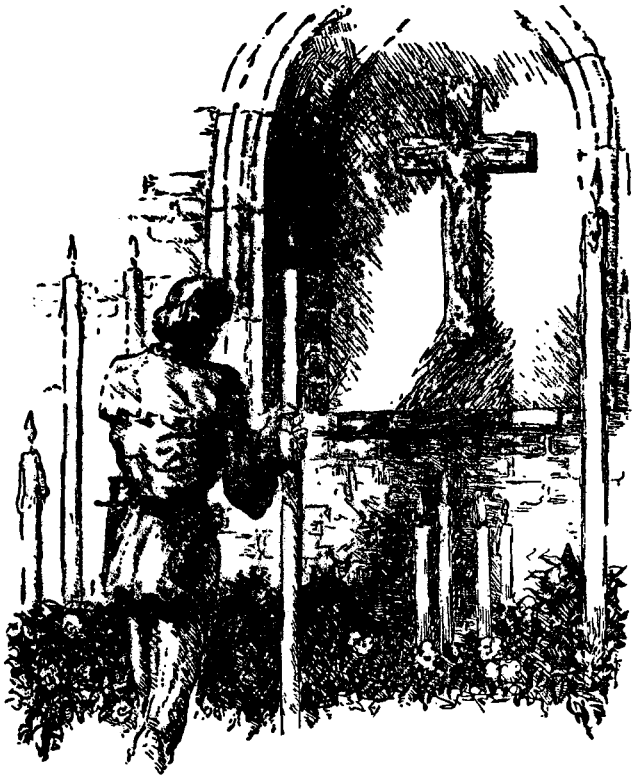

"Measuring Up" to a Saint

In France and England during the Middle Ages it was the custom of wealthy parishioners to donate candles tall as themselves for use on shrine altars.

This practice gave rise to the expression of "measuring up" to a saint.

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PURVEYORS TO THE VATICAN BY APPOINTMENT

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EDWARD S. SKILLIN: *Editor*
JOHN COGLEY: *Executive Editor*
JAMES O'GARA: *Managing Editor*

Assistant Editors:
WILLIAM P. CLANCY, WILLIAM PFAFF

Associate Editors:
The Labor Movement: JOHN C. CORT
The Screen: PHILIP T. HARTUNG
The Stage: RICHARD HAYES

Contributing Editors:
PHILIP BURNHAM, ANNE FREMANTLE

JOHN BRUBAKER: *Advertising Manager*

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THE Commonweal

week by week

THE GREAT PERSUADER

WHEN the President came before Congress for his first State of the Union message there were a few moments of tension. The nation last November had elected Dwight Eisenhower as its new chief. Now the question before the house—before the two Houses—was whether he would assert that leadership forcefully or, as sometimes seemed true during the campaign, whether the Taft wing of the Republican party was finally coming into full power under the auspices of, and in the name of, the man who as a distinguished soldier-diplomat delivered the death blow to American isolationism.

The new President had not got far along in his speech when the tension was broken. Dwight Eisenhower it was whom the people elected, and clearly it was Dwight Eisenhower, not Bob Taft or anybody else, whom the people were going to get. The State of the Union address was a good indication of the state of Dwight D. Eisenhower, for better or for worse the President of the United States on his own and no one else's terms.

What are the Eisenhower terms? The new President seems above all to be a man who stays close to the middle of the road. There was no doubt as he spoke that the nation had elected a Republican to the highest office, not a Democrat, and yet at times it seemed as if this were some third voice, cautioning both traditions not to go to extremes. It was not the voice of Harry S. Truman we heard, though at times it sounded a little like Truman, nor the voice of the Republican Old Guard, though there were familiar echoes of GOP campaign oratory in the speech, too. When Eisenhower described a condition—bad race relations, the need for social security, the interdependence of the free nations, the crushing cost of survival in the modern world, or the need for governmental support for agricultural prices—he sounded like a Democrat; when, in the next breath, he advised what should be done about it he sounded like a Republican. What he gave with the Democratic left hand he took away with the Republican right hand.

The President discussed a wide range of matters affecting the nation and proposed fairly specific solutions to many of them. In almost every case his formula was for a drastic limitation on federal activity and interference in the life of the nation, and the exaltation of the conference table. Ike Eisenhower's genius has been as a persuader, and in an age of legislated morality he apparently believes it is his role to reestablish the power of persuasion in American life. Whether he is talking of labor-management difficulties or race relations, the solution seems always to be found in the faith that free men can sit down together, without a Washington bureaucrat standing by, and reach an agreement on just about any problem bedeviling them.

There is a difference between this faith and the pious arguments against compulsion by those who simply do not want the problem solved. When Franklin D. Roosevelt came to power his main task was to convince the people that the government should move into their lives; Mr. Eisenhower is a counter-revolutionary—his role, as he envisions it, is to convince the people to get the government out of their lives. The only question here is whether, though there are enough conference tables in the nation, there are enough persuasive Dwight D. Eisenhowers to go around.

SINCE the Republicans were last in office the nation, with the memory of the great depression and twenty years of the New Deal behind it, has grown immensely in social-consciousness. Perhaps the "free play of economic forces" and Eisenhower's other extra-governmental solutions will work better now, with the threat of governmental coercion ever-present. "If that doesn't work," the President usually adds, whether he is talking about price controls or labor-management relations, "I shall not hesitate to call on the Congress for suitable legislation."

In any case it is all worth trying. No one really wants the government hovering over every branch

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of American life, and if Eisenhower can give the copy-book maxims of his own youth a vibrant new meaning in American life, he will indeed have achieved the purpose of his "crusade."

Compromise is the secret weapon of the successful persuader, and compromising on the differences between Americans is part of the Eisenhower formula. He speaks of civil rights in warm glowing terms, but he says nothing of civil rights legislation in the South: for the time being it will be enough to make the District of Columbia a model of democracy; he urges that Hawaii be granted statehood, but says nothing of Alaska: for the time being it is enough to consider our "island possessions."

So it goes: you give a little and you take a little. This is the Eisenhower formula; it characterized his monumental service as a soldier-diplomat; it was evident in the conduct of his political campaign. In the past phases of the Eisenhower career it worked with unfailing success. Now it is being put to its severest test. It may mean progress, but at a slower, less breathtaking pace than we have grown used to.

REMEDIES FOR THE WATERFRONT

NOW that the New York State Crime Commission has ended its weeks of lurid public hearings, what next? The state legislature has ample evidence of lawlessness, bribery, murder, boss gunmen, corrupt unions and intimidated workers on which to work. Local prosecutors have been presented with data for individual indictments; a few minor figures seem slated to take the rap, and there is even an unexpected outside chance that the czar of all, William J. McCormack, may be indicted for perjury. The FBI has been brought into the waterfront picture. Finally, the AFL in annual meeting finds itself under heavy pressure to take action at long last about its racket-ridden affiliate. The shipping and loading companies likewise have much to atone for. Moreover, the shape-up has to be supplanted by rotary hiring halls to deprive the pier bosses of much of their power and assure each longshoreman of an equitable share of available work. No empty political gestures or pious union resolutions will do the herculean job. And the waterfront never will be cleaned up without vigorous and sustained public insistence.

NEXT WEEK

JOSEPH T. NOLAN writes about an incident involving segregation in a small-town parish in one of our border states.

"There was no parochial school because there would have to be two schools and the parish at most could support one. That was why the Sisters came with the vacation school. And color was why things began smoldering the first day. The nuns were not unused to the South. But even in the South, white and colored children often play together. So the nuns thought nothing of seating them together in the mission church where the instructions were to be held. After all, these were little children, without the inhibitions of adults. But by noontime the party line alarm system had sounded all its telephone bells . . ."

ANTI-FASCISM; ANTI-COMMUNISM

WE now have evidence of a vicious anti-Semitic pogrom being initiated in the Soviet-dominated world. As a result of it there is deepened awareness among Jews of the nature of the Communist threat, and elements of Jewish opinion better known in the past for their defense of the "liberal" position than for their vigorous anti-Communism are rallied in protest against the Soviet's resurrection of Nazi-era horrors. Witnessing this, there seems to be a tendency for some veteran anti-Communists to say "I told you so."

In this vein the managing editor of a well known Catholic paper, one famous even in the Catholic press for the vigor of its anti-Communism, recently wrote of Max Lerner's "awakening" to the Communist menace. "Communism," the editor wrote, "would not be half the menace it is today to both Christian and Jew if the Lerners had made Stalin and his ideology the first and continual target of their work, their investigations, their organization, their welfare [*sic*], and their pressures."

The Max Lerners, he thinks, worried too much about fascism in the Hitler-ridden thirties. Jewish citizens, he says, "had nothing to fear from [Gerald L. K.] Smith, or Smythe of the Protestant War Veterans, or Winrod or a number of other such figures whom some of their professional agencies were forever magnifying and publicizing." "Communism," he warns his Jewish friends, "is the foe of all of us. Don't forget that and don't let anyone distract you by continually yelling Fascism or anti-Semitism while ignoring Communism."

The editor misses the point. It is probably true that, statistically, the Jewish community has been less universally aware of the danger of Communism than, say, the Catholic community. It is also

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probably true that more Jews have been involved in support of Communist movements and fronts than the members of some other minority groups.

But those who were so involved have never been more than a small minority within their own group, and to observe that the Jews have been, on the whole, more thoroughly anti-fascist than anti-Communist is merely to observe that they have reacted to historical situations as one would expect them to react, as, indeed, they had to react. In the process, some of them undoubtedly developed a certain blindness to the real nature of Communism because of its anti-fascist pose. But in this they displayed no more wisdom (and no less) than others in similar historical situations.

There is an analogy to be drawn between whatever "softness" certain Jews may have felt toward Communism in the thirties and a comparable blindness which exists in some Catholic circles now. For, terrified by the immediate threat of fascism, the temptation for the Jews was to accept as an ally whatever force posed as fascism's enemy. Catholics, threatened with the immediate evil of Communism, face a similar temptation. It seems especially ironic, in this connection, that the Catholic editor who now deplores Max Lerner's "belated" awakening to the Communist evil is himself a militant apologist for the junior Senator from Wisconsin.

MR. TRUMAN AND THE BOMB

THERE is no doubt that Mr. Truman's gratitude at being once more "just a private citizen" is real enough. But for a long time to come he is likely to find that his most routine actions will still attract national attention and that his lightest utterances will continue to make front-page news.

If any proof were needed of the fact that it is not easy for ex-Presidents to fade away—no matter what their desires—the treatment accorded Mr. Truman's recent remarks on the A-bomb should have clinched the point. At what seems a late date, Mr. Truman expressed to a newspaper interviewer his doubt that Russia really possessed the A-bomb. Naturally enough, this set the press wires humming, and the denials were quick in coming.

The resultant exchange left little doubt in anyone's mind that Mr. Truman is unlikely to change his opinion on the subject. But on what grounds he bases his convictions it is impossible to say.

Mr. Truman himself announced to the nation the news of the original atomic explosion in Russia, and although this does not necessarily mean that the Soviet Union has a militarily feasible A-bomb, intelligence officers, defense officials and members of the Atomic Energy Commission all unite in saying that there is not the slightest doubt that Russia does indeed have the A-bomb.

It was not so very many years ago that "experts" were assuring us that Hitler's tanks were papier-mache. But when Hitler's legions began to march, history proved how woefully wrong such wishful estimates of Nazi strength were. In his years as President, Mr. Truman earned the gratitude of the nation by his efforts to alert the U. S. to the danger it faces from the Soviet Union. It would be tragic now if his recently expressed doubts about Soviet possession of the A-bomb were to lull the nation into a dangerous mood of false confidence.

THE COMMUTER AND HIS PAPER

IN the metropolitan suburb to which many an American family has repaired so that the children may have light and air and a chance to play away from city traffic hazards, the individual father feels at times as if he were in a goldfish bowl. There is a time each weekday for setting off to work—by bus, car, train or subway. The hour for return is equally defined. There is such conformity to the commuting pattern that any able-bodied male who appears on local sidewalks between the two appointed hours feels clearly out of place.

A newspaper under the arm at commuting hours is an integral part of this daily pattern. Undismayed by the sophisticated gibes at suburbanites or by observers' assurances that many Russians study —or at least read books—on their way to and from work, the American commuter sticks doggedly to his newspaper. So much so that there was something positively eerie the other morning about suburban platforms near New York, when a delivery strike shut off the newsdealers supply of papers. What was a man to do with himself until the 8:09 arrived at the city terminal?

Doubtless this strike has revealed to many a suburbanite a dependence upon his newspaper of which he had previously been but dimly aware. Unfriendly critics of the American way of life would seize upon such dependence as an indication of cultural decadence. The newspaper would then function as an anodyne to lull the mind to forgetfulness while the body is transported to a place for more or less strenuous human effort. The commuter's fixation on his daily paper would also be explained as a sign of his restlessness and his chronic inability to think independently and exchange ideas.

Yet the American's dependence on his newspaper

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can well be taken in a quite opposite vein. On the presumption that the paper of his choice makes a serious effort to transmit the important news, this unvarying habit often betokens an interest in the affairs of the world that is a distinctly heartening thing. In fact, the hours spent in transit with his newspaper make the American commuter as well informed a citizen as his counterpart anywhere.

EXCESS PROFITS

UNLESS Congress takes positive action, the excess profits tax will automatically expire on June 30th. For some months it was widely predicted that a Republican victory would mark the end of this tax. Evidently that assumption was well founded, since the new Secretary of the Treasury, George M. Humphrey, will not urge the legislators to extend the life of the tax, which he describes as a "bad law" and "not in the best interests of the country." His department, Mr. Humphrey said, should be able to devise "some better means than the excess profits tax" to get needed revenue.

To give Mr. Humphrey's side of the argument its due, it must be admitted that the administration of the excess profits law has not been easy, and there is enough evidence of inequities in the law to call for possible amendment. But the tax not only raises revenue for the government but helps to prevent excessive profits by firms which benefit from defense work in general and the Korean war in particular. This is still a legitimate aim, one the people are unlikely to repudiate, and renegotiation of war contracts would not come near to achieving this end. If the excess profits tax is really marked for extinction, it should not be allowed to die without full and public debate.

STRAW HAT AND HOMBURG

WHEN Mr. Dulles flew to Europe last week, he was making a pilgrimage to the unfriendly land. Europeans resented things which he had said, and worried over things which he planned to do.

First, there was the matter of "liberation," a slogan which scared the living daylights out of many Europeans. Now it seems clear that Mr. Dulles has no immediate plans for dropping Rangers into Czechoslovakia, but Europeans remain disquieted at such casual treatment of life-and-death issues. Then, Mr. Dulles made his radio and television address two weeks ago, where, in what presumably was intended as a cracker-barrel exposition of foreign policy, he was again ominously vague about great problems. And finally, there was the controversial new policy on Chiang Kai-shek's mainland operations. Whether it was largely for propaganda effect, or was a real "second front" move, the announcement was enough to give Europe grave fears.

One can sympathize with Mr. Dulles' situation, for in addition to re-establishing a badly shaken State Department, he has both to satisfy Republican demands for a new foreign policy, and maintain the momentum of American diplomacy.

After his radio-TV fence-mending, Mr. Dulles took off his straw hat, put on his homburg, and joined Mr. Stassen in a week of high-level diplomacy. And he looked much more at home. His visits to Rome and Paris were short, but gave him the opportunity for business-like discussion and briefing. He made short and admirable statements in both cities, emphasizing his desire to work with and help the Europeans in realizing their own visions.

At this writing, Mr. Dulles has not yet visited London, where his most severe critics were grimly waiting. But if he maintains the sincere and frank spirit of the Rome and Paris visits, it is to be hoped that the British press and public will lay down their anti-American clubs and make more of an effort to understand Mr. Dulles' peculiar problem.

And it may be hoped that when Mr. Dulles' completes his trip, he will have a better understanding of these basic facts: England is not going to join the European community as a full partner. She insists upon her Commonwealth and Atlantic interests. Secondly, that America cannot force European unification. Increased pressure may heat the fire under the Europeans, but too much pressure, and the use of threats, will harden European opposition and weaken the coalition governments of France and Germany.

European "unification" is meaningless unless it is the free unity of purpose and aspiration. If we treat it as if it were merely an instrument of U. S. policy, we are going to find ourselves with only a unity of anti-Americanism and neutrality.

There is reason to be confident that Mr. Dulles *will* see these things, for he is an intelligent man and an able diplomat. His problems come only when he tries to be Everyman's Diplomat. Let him stick to the conduct of foreign affairs, and depend on the intelligence of the American people to recognize and respect a man who does his work well. And if segments of Congress and the press refuse to grant him their support, let him realize that no amount of one-syllable explanation will convert them, and no grand solution short of panacea itself will satisfy them.

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The Robot Revolution

"IT APPEARS MORE URGENT THAN EVER THAT SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE TO RE-INTEGRATE THE LIFE OF THE FACTORY"

GEOFFREY ASHE

THE disquiet about the industrial worker is more than sectional. "We must convince the man on the bench that he too has a stake in management," said Robert E. Gross, President of Lockheed Aircraft, in discussing the problem. From leaders of capitalism like Mr. Gross, from leftist theoreticians like the English author of the *New Fabian Essays,* from Catholics like Christopher Hollis, and from romantics in the Ruskin-Gandhi tradition—continually it is the same story that comes. Nowadays (these convergent testimonies assure us) the industrial employee finds himself in the grip of a faceless monster that means nothing to him except a paycheck. Of course, when he sits in his home and looks around, he has to admit that the monster doesn't treat him too badly. He has more money, more amenities, more leisure, than his father had. Yet at work he is a puppet on the end of a string; and a terribly expendable puppet. He feels no responsibility. He doesn't belong.

Protest can go too far. The sentimentalists' image of the zombie factory hand, chained to his place on the assembly line through the day and a stultified husk by evening, hardly squares with current realities. The civilized worker, particularly the union member, is far better off than that. Still there is no doubt that most of what dignifies his life lies outside the plant where he makes his living.

Outside, the worker can still order many things his own way, if his wife will let him. If she won't, she is at least a challenge to his qualities of firmness and tact. Inside, as a rule, he orders nothing. His job is a stereotyped function with no challenge in it at all—repeatedly tightening five nuts, repeatedly tripping a punch press. He has no problems to solve, only vexations to put up with. The foreman is probably his horizon. Yet the big decisions occur in the undiscovered country beyond, from which, at times, spectres with stop-watches emerge to plague him.

Chaplin has made memorable comedy of the whole business, but fundamentally it is not very comic. Mindless and myopic obedience, whatever it may spell in the way of greater efficiency, higher output, or increased earnings, has a nasty psychological undertone.

On assembly lines, for instance, nervous tension sometimes accumulates to a point where the workers burst out into senseless shouts and yells. There are plants where a cathartic "line cry" at approved intervals has actually been made a routine. Prying below the visible and audible, psychologists catch glimpses of unhealthy dream-worlds. Every machine-shop houses a swarm of Walter Mittys. Their hands labor, their minds wander. Thought, will, passion, most of the things in which their humanity consists, fail to make contact with the task.

Everybody admits that American-style capitalism has raised American living standards. But some of its more gradual effects are perhaps becoming manifest in the growth of drug-taking, insomnia, frigidity, divorce. Now that TV has made even the home a place of daydreams, it appears more urgent than ever that something should be done to re-integrate the life of the factory.

Ideas put forward—and to some extent acted upon—are quite numerous, but the many local successes persist so far in adding up to over-all failure. The bolder captains of industry dally with employee suggestion schemes, human relations programs, and structural reforms like the "multiple management" pioneered by McCormick, the great Baltimore grocer. Thoughtful Catholics follow the recent "sociological" popes, Leo XIII and Pius XI, extolling small property, trust-busting, and co-partnership. In France their teachings have

Mr. Ashe, who has written widely on literary and political matters, is at present making a first-hand study of industrial problems.

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had a perceptible influence. (Not that this means much; France being what she is, the same could be said of any doctrine on earth.) The Socialists propose . . . one can hardly glean from the *New Fabian Essays* what they do propose. It sounds like a heady mixture of all the other measures, with a dash of Syndicalism. As for the romantics, they turn their backs on the problem, and yearn for a revival of cottage craftsmanship. They talk about slavery to the machine. They might as well talk about slavery to the wheelbarrow. Only human beings enslave human beings. In any case, the issue is not slavery but a far more complex phenomenon.

We have to deal with the Managerial Revolution. That is the view of many people who remain unimpressed by the thesis expounded by James Burnham. The capitalist is no longer the *deus in machina,* and the quarrel of Left and Right, in its old form, is outmoded. Conservative spokesmen keep averring that the era of the exploiting monopolist is over. Granted the identification of power with wealth, they are right. Private property in the means of production has spread out instead of bunching together. There are now six and a half million stockholders in the U. S., most of them ordinary citizens. This is not much of a spread, yet it cannot be ignored. Taken together with the rise in real wages, it upsets Marx's prophecy that everything must one day be owned by a few plutocrats lording it over a generation of scarecrows.

PROPERTY is no longer power in any relevant sense. Power to shape the lives of the masses is not for sale, least of all to the masses themselves. Transfers of ownership cannot change the condition of the man at the bench. With most modern companies, no amount of stock purchase would buy real control of administration. On the boards of directors, salaried executives heavily outnumber stockholders. A Stanford survey of thirty-one leading organizations showed that roughly half the directors were drawn from top management, and only a fifth from the ranks of owners. Stockholders vote on policies which are drawn up by managers, expounded by managers, and carried through by managers.

Even the biggest ownership change of all, nationalization, does not alter the picture. Several of the New Fabians concede as much. The British worker in a State industry is sometimes better paid and looked after than he used to be, but he doesn't *feel* different. He still has no share in the authority that allots him his place and tells him what motions he must perform.

The nature of management, not the distribution of ownership, is the heart of the mystery. If we pluck it out, what do we discover?

Oddly enough, the entire secret has for many years been everyone's for the asking. It is set forth in the works of Frederick Taylor, the "Father of Scientific Management."

The problem Taylor faced seems fantastic, in the light of what we are generally told about the bad old days. Before World War I, as the IWW leaders knew, many preconditions for workers' control of industry already existed. In fact, to a surprising extent, workers already did control industry. To talk of "building a new society in the shell of the old" was then practical politics. It was an unofficial Syndicalism-within-Capitalism that Taylor ran up against.

As a foreman in the machine-shop, Taylor tried to force the lathe operators to work full tilt, and found it almost impossible. They soldiered on the job, they faked accidents, they kept him in the dark as to how fast they really could go. They were able to do this because their private traditional skills, nothing else, kept the shop ticking.

Taylor, nevertheless, was resolved that the hustling should occur somehow. He invented time-study and methods-analysis with the idea of fixing objective piece-rates. He wanted to find out what really constituted a fair day's work, and drive the wage bargains accordingly. Given a solid basis, he reasoned, workers would accept an incentive scheme, and co-operate with management to hoist output.

When a streamlined method had been devised and an output target calculated, one of the staff went to the worker with an instructor, and explained that if he followed the new method and kept on hitting the target he would earn a premium over and above his regular wage. The results were spectacular. In one famous case, a pig-iron handler who had been shifting twelve and one half tons a day was trained to shift forty-seven without feeling any the worse. His earnings increased (though not, it is worth remarking, in the ratio of forty-seven to twelve and one half).

Scientific Management, or at least a bias towards it, is now general in American industry and gaining ground abroad. It has changed a great deal since Taylor, but the central technique is the same as ever. This is the Transfer of Skill, upon which modern mass-production hinges. Where the old-time worker often had a fairly elaborate routine and gave thought to it himself, the worker today has a fairly simple routine entailing a minimum of thought, a minimum of initiative. The essential effect of Taylorism was "to take control away from workers and put planning in the hands of management." Could anything be plainer?

Taylor's own blueprint for Scientific Management was Utopian. He sincerely believed in "absolute justice for the workman," and gave up one excellent job because his bosses didn't. He envisioned his ideal management as an overall purposeful activity, with every employee contributing to the vast cerebration at the

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center. Wherever he took a hand personally, something of the sort did begin to develop. But he admitted in 1912 that Scientific Management, as he conceived it, had never been installed anywhere. His transformation has left industry with a human problem which must either be solved or bring a dangerous reckoning.

OF remedies proposed, employee stock purchase often finds favor with outsiders. This has occasionally worked out well in conjunction with other measures, but it is far from general in any American industry. It must also be stressed that tinkering with ownership no longer makes much difference; the worker-owners themselves hardly ever regard their holdings as giving them a stake in the firm or an improved status. The shares are bought simply as an investment or speculation, and they fail to constitute an incentive.

Joint consultation and allied schemes, while admirable in themselves and indeed essential to any imaginable solution, are palliatives, rather than remedies. In their present form they accept the structure as axiomatic and seek to humanize it.

As for the old Socialist dream of a collective conquest of power, that is certainly exploded. The amount of necessary training would now be out of all proportion to the resources of the labor movement. Also, as surveys have abundantly proved, the will is lacking. Even in principle, only one American worker out of eight cares about having a voice in management, and the number willing to train for it would be far smaller.

The cure lies elsewhere. A change has begun to show in the managerial pattern, where mechanical and statistical methods are narrowing the scope for choice. Today, long tables of "standard data" on motiontime are slowly eliminating even the minor acts of judgment involved in time-study. Departmental manuals of "standard practice" are reducing the work of industrial engineers to a stylized routine. The logical end of this transformation is a long way off yet, nevertheless, it is coming into sight. The skill that migrated from the machine-tenders to the managerial staff will migrate again. This time it will migrate to the machines.

Potentially, the age of the robot is upon us. This is not to say that we shall soon be confronted with the monstrous dummies imagined by novelists. The fact is simply that the tools of production are acquiring sense-organs and nervous systems, and may just as well go on to acquire brains. Electronic installations, copying and improving on human faculties, have invaded industry with a new sort of skill. Timing control, welding control, quality control, counting, sorting, inspection—dozens of apparently human functions have in many places been taken over by machinery under the eyes and hands of the workers.

These functions are not strictly managerial. Planning is absent, and things, not persons, are controlled. But no arbitrary boundaries can be drawn. Beyond the initial wave of electronic success lies the "Second Industrial Revolution" that is hatching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. One cannot afford nowadays to be out of touch with the work of Vannevar Bush, inventor of the differential analyzer, or Norbert Wiener, who has built up the science of information-handling under the name of Cybernetics.

Wiener's famous thinking-machines imitate conscious organisms so well that they can be used to study nervous disorders. The machines, of course, are not living creatures. They have no initiative. But, given factual assignments, they can handle them enormously better than living brains can; and Wiener's work foreshadows a time when the control of industry will be automatic nearly all the way up. A decisive portion of the planning will be built into the machine itself.

Wiener would regard this as a step toward liberation, though a perilous one. The title of his last book, *The Human Use of Human Beings,* sufficiently indicates his mode of approach. Do the facts bear him out? In so far as machines in industry are already usurping human functions, what is the effect upon the workers who tend them?

On this point, the effect, it seems, is encouraging. The return of intelligence to the production level, even in a non-human form, widens the vision of the worker and fits him to move upward.

Here are the first glimmerings of an answer to the problem we started from. On the one hand, the manual workers, whom Taylor and Ford forced to do less and less, may now begin to do more and more, and understand better what they are about. Something similar will happen to clerical workers. On the other hand, the managerial crowd, who today wallow in paper-work demanding a wholly different set of qualifications, may learn to entrust their tasks to computing devices. Then the barrier will break. Factories will no longer be manned by two classes of people, but by one class—namely, competent machine-operators. The machines may differ in function over a vast range, but they will not differ essentially in kind.

Here and there, one sees beginnings, nothing more. The second Transfer of Skill is only nibbling. There is, however, no obvious reason why the process should stop.

Mechanization will pay because efficiency pays, and the profit system in the US does promote the progress of things that pay. If the war danger continues, Pentagon cybernetics and manpower troubles will add an ugly but potent stimulus. Revolution is coming all right, but in what spirit? The technicians will decide; and it seems as important as anything in the world that the technicians should think what they are doing.

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Prudence and the Pickets

THE city of Denver, Colorado, is still recovering from the effects of a bitter six-week strike in the city's supermarkets. This strike involved a total of eighty stores and eighteen hundred butchers and clerks.

The owners included Safeway Stores, a national chain, and four local chains. All but nineteen stores were closed for the duration. This is a big strike by any test.

I would never have heard about it, however, if it had not been for a reader of The Commonweal in the Denver area, who wrote in, enclosing a number of clippings.

The main issue in the walkout was a forty hour week for the same pay as that formerly received for forty-eight hours. However, the unions involved—the Retail Clerks and Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen, both AFL—expressed their willingness early in the game to submit the whole dispute to an impartial committee and abide by its decision.

The store owners refused to go along with this reasonable method of settlement. And so they fought it out on the picket line, and for the strikers the issue became: "How long can I hold out against that hungry look on the kids' faces and the complaints of the landlord?"

And at nineteen stores in the city of Denver, Catholic housewives every day faced their own consciences and had to answer another question: "Will I cross this picket line or will I walk blocks further to that place where the fruit is half rotten and the old thief charges ten cents more for a dozen eggs?"

Within those nineteen stores several hundred scabs and strikebreakers had to answer an even more serious question: "Can I live with myself, knowing that my presence on this job is treason to my fellow workers and a knife in their backs?"

So here we had several pressing questions of conscience for the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Denver, plus a certain amount of plain old-fashioned suffering. Just as we have had similar suffering and similar questions of conscience for the faithful of almost every diocese in America when similar strikes have occurred.

My correspondent makes some good points in his letter:

"Like any strike, this one is either just, unjust or mixed. If it is just, informed Catholics and men of good will ought to support it, if only by observing the picket lines.

"But the average man isn't equipped to do this difficult judging. It requires knowledge of principles, all relevant facts, time to make the study, prudence.

"Lacking all these, the average man needs guidance. He can't get it from the Denver dailies. Their editorial writers are neither Catholic nor plain natural-law philosophers. Further, these papers have a practical, understandable reason for not taking the workers' side . . . Much of their advertising comes from these Denver supermarkets.

"The Commonweal and *America* can't deliver this judgment. The matter is too local. Catholics can't get the judgment from their pastors, who reasonably have more urgent demands on their time.

"Logical source would be the diocesan paper: fully equipped to do the job; perhaps bound (either in charity, justice, or newspaper tradition) at least to attempt it."

But the Denver *Catholic Register,* just as most diocesan weeklies have done when faced by similar challenges, said nothing about the strike either in its news columns or on its editorial page. It was just as if the strike, and all its attendant questions of conscience, had never existed.

My friend continues: "It remained for a layman to find the courage, wisdom and love to break silence."

THE layman was Eugene Cervi, editor and publisher of a businessmen's weekly known as *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal,* described on the masthead as "a relatively independent newspaper intended to merit the attention and respect of mature adults interested in significant news."

This is one publisher's boast which turns out to be an understatement. Eugene Cervi, whose own livelihood depends directly on the good will of the business community and not at all on the good will of any unions or strikers whatsoever, had this to say in the lead editorial of Volume IV, No. 13:

"I want to get into the morality of the supermarket strike now in its fifth week in Denver. I want to take a stand—a stand on the side of the strikers and against Tom Henritze, Moe Miller, Lud Rettig and Spencer Marr.

"This is an issue of simple justice. There's nothing personal in these remarks . . .

"The representatives of some of the big churches have been in town this week and they talked of morality and the universal brotherhood of man. In Korea our men fight to preserve the dignity of free individuals.

"In Denver the supermarket owners are invoking the

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cruelest weapon of all to break the strike—hunger. Hungry clerks and butchers are no match for the well-fed functionaries of Jim Logan's professional bargaining agents. This I object to.

"I have waited five weeks to learn if a citizen's group, some church people or some other objective organization would come to the rescue and aid of the embattled strikers—slowly running out of funds with which to pay their pitiful weekly strike benefits . . .

"In taking my stand on the side of the strikers I am not saying that the owners are all wrong and the strikers all right. Surely there is ground for an honorable compromise.

"Do we live in a city in which might makes right? Do we really want a society in which some approach to justice is possible? . . .

"I am sure the owners of the Denver supermarkets are not deliberately malevolent persons. These editorial columns, however, would be less than valid if they didn't shout to the whole wide world that the owners are guilty of extremely bad judgment."

MR. Cervi is clearly a most unusual man. The question is, why couldn't something like this have appeared in the diocesan paper? Or even something much milder and more cautiously worded?

I suppose the answer would be that it would not be "prudent." This word "prudent" can bear analysis. It is a word that we hear a lot of when people, and particularly Catholics, don't want to do something. As I understand the virtue of prudence, it is concerned with the selection of the best means to achieve our Christian end, namely, the salvation of souls.

Over the years prudence has become synonymous with a conservative, cautious approach to the problem of means. But it seems obvious that in certain circumstances, the most effective means to attain the end, and therefore the most prudent, might be positively sensational.

Consider the saints, who have given us the best examples of prudence among the race of mere men. St. Paul soap-boxing in the square at Athens, St. Francis kissing the lepers, St. Thomas à Becket attacking Henry II, and a thousand other saints of God flying in the face of all the fears, prejudices and conventions of their contemporaries should have persuaded us once and for all that "the prudent thing" is not always and necessarily the safe thing and that sometimes we may use the word "prudence" when what we really mean is "cowardice."

Is it more prudent to risk the ill will of a few supermarket owners or to risk the scandal of thousands of blunted consciences and the bitterness of eighteen hundred strikers and their families who are looking for no more than a kind word from their spiritual leaders?

Almost inevitably, this column will be interpreted as a criticism of the Denver *Catholic Register*. I do not mean it as such, at least no more than it is a criticism of our diocesan press in general. Some of the best of our many editors of Catholic papers have pursued a similar policy. I am only commending to the attention of all such editors the consideration of a change.

P.S. Thanks perhaps partly to Mr. Cervi's bold stand, the Denver strike was not wholly a failure. The workers won their forty-hour week, though it will take them three years and some loss in take-home pay before they can enjoy it completely. On other less tangible damage, there are no available statistics.

JOHN C. CORT.

FROM ITALY

Gallismo: The Secret Understanding

IT happened early last Spring in the Canal Zone, just outside Ismailia in Egypt. It was after the trouble between the British and the Egyptians had reached its peak. I was visiting the desert camp where the Egyptian prisoners were being kept. The camp was known among the British as "the lobster pot," for it was filled to more than capacity, and the dark-uniformed, jammed-together Egyptians reminded one of lobsters crawling over one other. Shortly before my visit, the British had attacked the police station in Ismailia, and fifty British infantrymen with two Centurion tanks had killed forty Egyptians, wounded seventy, and taken more than seven hundred prisoner. Once more the fair men had defeated the dark men.

The Egyptian lieutenant with whom I talked felt bitterly humiliated by the defeat. I had found him in one of the officer-prisoners' tents, wearing a silk dressing gown and embroidered slippers. His English was excellent, for he was just back from a course at the British War Academy at Sandhurst, near London. He was strikingly handsome, with almond-shaped eyes and black hair. With pride he showed me the gifts and piles of letters which had come from all over Egypt to the "heroes" in the prison camp. But not all the letters were addressed in Arabic: there were many in English with United Kingdom stamps. He picked them out with

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special satisfaction, and handed them to me, asking me to read them. They were all signed with English girls' names; Sybil, Joan, Constance: *yours forever . . . with all my love . . .*

I did not want to be indiscreet, and started to hand the letters back, but the lieutenant insisted that I read them, and as I did he leaned back blowing cigarette smoke through his nostrils, and he looked with deep satisfaction at the ruddy-faced British sergeant who was patiently waiting for me in the sunshine outside the tent.

The British could not be more severely judged than by those letters from girls in Sandhurst and London, all of them apparently madly in love. That was the Egyptian lieutenant's revenge. You have beaten us, you pale strangers, but we revenge ourselves through your women! You have humiliated us, but we work a deeper humiliation on you!

IT was in other terms the same thing which had happened in the case of the Italian wartime prisoners in Britain before the Italian breakdown, and afterwards with the Italian prisoners in Germany. It was the same thing which had happened with the French POW's in Germany. The Latins got their revenge through the women of the fair-skinned conquerors. They got their revenge so thoroughly that it became a major problem for the conquerors, for if the prisoners were blocked from contacting the women, the women would find clandestine ways of seeing the men. A famous British cartoon published towards the end of the war shows two weary and heavily-burdened British soldiers, returned from the front, looking at a group of well-groomed Italian POW's playing cards with admiring English girls. One of the soldiers wipes the sweat from his forehead and says "Hey, Bill! Have we won the war or have they?"

The dark-skinned men take their revenge for military defeat. What success, they say, outweighs success with women? And what defeat is worse?

AND that, of course, is the question. It is not a rhetorical question, for behind it is a mentality characteristic of the dark-skinned men of many countries; a mentality which contrasts with that of the fair man, whether the fair men call the dark ones "dagos," "wops," "frogs," or not. The people are aware of this mentality in Italy, and they have a name for it which is very difficult to translate. It is called "gallismo," which comes from "gallo," which means "rooster". At any rate, the rooster is the symbol.

Picasso's surrealist rooster is on the cover of an Italian book which analyzes this mentality, and its extreme consequences, with great frankness and self-criticism. It is a novel, and it would not have been as successful had the public not so clearly seen in it their image. The book is *Il bell' Antonio*—Handsome Antonio, and its author is Vitaliano Brancati.

Antonio is the son of well-to-do Sicilian parents. Even as a child, he is so handsome that he does not leave women indifferent. He and even his less-attractive friends seem to exercise such an attraction that it was, says the author, "as if between them and even completely unknown women a secret understanding was at once established, as between people who together have committed unspeakable acts."

Antonio's father sends him to Rome to make a political career—it was during the Fascist period—and there he continues to fascinate women. He never spoke about this strange attraction, and his friends interpreted his silence as the natural, somewhat snobbish attitude of a genuine Don Juan. In the meantime, Antonio's parents arranged a marriage for him with a beautiful and wealthy girl. His engagement was of the old Italian kind, during which he and the girl were rarely left alone. The marriage was a great event in the Sicilian town, and was talked about in envy for months afterwards. It seemed to be a happy marriage, although for three years there were no children. And then, quite by accident, the explosive secret was revealed: Antonio was incurably impotent.

Now this was considered to be by far the greatest dishonor a man and his family could know. Antonio's father refused at first to believe it, and in time broke down over the fact. The two families tried to conceal the news, but in spite of their secrecy, the town came to know and talk. The girl's family arranged an annulment, and Antonio took refuge like a hunted animal in his family's home. The bluff he had built up over the years had fallen.

As if to expiate the dishonor, Antonio's seventy-year-old father goes to a prostitute one night during an air raid. He is killed. It is towards the end of the war, the beginning of Italy's military collapse.

When everything is over and Sicily is occupied, one of Antonio's friends, himself a frantic woman-hunter, is lamenting the humiliation of defeat, and says to console Antonio that success with women easily turns into a substitute for all other successes. At that moment, he really feels that sexual success is a substitute—and then the next day he meets the next woman and forgets about what he has said, and about the conquerers. Rarely has the mentality symbolized by the rooster been more consistently and crudely illustrated.

To reduce virility to mere physical function, no matter how important that may be, is surely to fragmentize virility. But what about the woman? She is the goal of this simple-minded virility, and perhaps that explains her obvious attraction to it, and explains that "secret understanding" Brancati writes about.

GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN.

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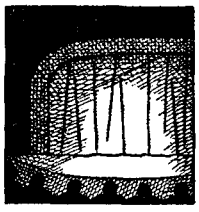
THE STAGE

MID-SUMMER

MISS Vina Delmar, an honored headmistress of the school of marshmallow magazine fiction, has stepped out of the glossy suburbs to write a play of considerable weight and implication. I do not imagine one would be moved to any notable expense of spirit in unraveling the feminine intricacies of "Mid-Summer;" it would not reward that kind of attention. Yet by a delicacy and precision of feeling it does establish its own authority. Miss Delmar has not an original sensibility, but her shrewd talent for observation, her feminine preocupation with the nuance of manners, gives "Mid-Summer" its shapeliness and distinction. Such modest proposals do not, it is true, usually survive in the great maw of Broadway; we are unaccountably more susceptible to some ponderous view of The Theatre as Salvation, or The Theatre as Lectern, than to these simple and civilized pleasures.



Miss Delmar's setting is a shabby hotel room in the New York of 1907, a scene she creates with exactitude and freshness of imagination. In its midst, she situates a young couple: the husband a former teacher who has abandoned his profession for the transient satisfactions of a vaudeville career; his unlettered, deeply affectionate wife, and their precocious little girl, grown cool and intelligently cynical under the weight of so many domestic alterations.

Around this frame, Miss Delmar fashions an astringent parable of human happiness and the tragic divisions of those who seek it. All of her observation, but especially her sexual perception, is acute: she is aware that for a man, satisfaction is intimately allied with his own implication in the show of life, his own ability to test and resist its pressures, while a woman's happiness is much more likely to arise from some deeper interior source, and will issue in quiescence and harmony rather than activity. Carefully skirting the cliches of this sexual situation, Miss Delmar made it the melancholy and insoluble center of her play.

In the performance at the Vanderbilt, the lines of this conflict were sharply drawn. Mark Stevens had a firm and excellent masculinity as the husband, while Jenny Hecht, as the eerily precocious child, gave one of the most impressive exhibitions of juvenile skill I have ever witnessed. Vicki Cummings again lends her brassy charm and impeccable authority to a familiar role, and indeed, the level of the ensemble acting, Howard Bay's *decor,* and the Motley costumes are of a distinguished calibre. But it is really Geraldine Page's evening all the way.

In her Broadway debut, Miss Page displays the kind of talent which time can only enrich and deepen, not diminish. She has what the English happily call "star quality"—that is, she dominates the stage without ever destroying the articulation of a scene; her very presence suggests entire reaches of the spirit not immediately accessible to the mind. Her style is bland and subtle, with roots in the same tradition which has nourished Julie Harris and Shirley Booth; by an artless tenderness of speech and gesture, she binds you sweetly without your knowledge that you have ever been taken. I do not think it presumptuous to see in Miss Page's portrait of a displaced person of the heart one of the central performances of the contemporary theatre, and an introduction to a permanently interesting new actress. (*At the Vanderbilt.*)

THE BAT

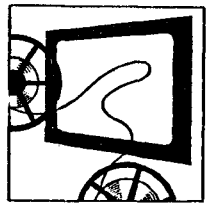
MRS. Mary Roberts Rinehart's crepuscular melodrama is back again, ostensibly with hopes of delighting what Leigh Hunt once called "the great babies of the town." But this overgrown infant, ready to palpitate at anybody's circular staircase or sliding panel, must confess to having found Mrs. Rinehart's bat quite hopelessly cold turkey. Had it been performed with some measure of wit, an audience might be persuaded to accept the piece on its nostalgic merits, but this routine company plays as if it actually expected us to acquiesce in such antediluvian hokum. With Lucile Watson in the role of the indomitable Miss van Gorder, one may anticipate a certain professional finish, but not even she, nor the multiple-jointed Zasu Pitts, can make these dry bones live. (*At the National.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

AFTER "Moulin Rouge," the new film which purports to tell the story of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, has run two-thirds of its course, the point is well made that "one should never meet a person whose work one admires." By that time we have not only met Lautrec but have got to know quite a bit about the dissipated life he led in Paris in the '90s. Yet, in spite of being pictorially one of the handsomest Technicolor films ever made, "Moulin Rouge" has a quality of coldness that keeps us detached from its characters and action.



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Perhaps this quality of detachment is exactly what Director John Huston wanted to achieve: the central character in his film is an artist, a man who was so crippled by a fall in his youth that his legs never grew and so instead of participating in life he became a mere observer. Watching from the sidelines, Lautrec recorded his observations on men and women at cafes, race tracks, circuses and elsewhere in paintings that made him famous. But toward life itself Lautrec was pretty bitter. His only escape was in painting, drinking, and dissolute living; and death came as a final escape in 1901, after he learned that his paintings were accepted by the Louvre. He was the first artist to be so honored while still alive.

It is difficult to understand why John Huston chose the Pierre La Mure novel as a basis for his script. Although literate and well written, it is neither an accurate nor complete account of Lautrec. It tries to make us understand the man with statements like "This life is the only one I have," and "Life itself is not simple, nor is the human mind, nor the human heart," but it needs to tell us much more than it does and it needs at least a little warmth.

However, the picture has caught the feeling of the period with stunning effect. The street scenes, the smoky Moulin Rouge Cafe with the Can-Can girls and other entertainers and enthusiastic patrons, and the shots of Lautrec's studio are done with an accuracy and cinematic movement in lovely Technicolor that Lautrec himself would have approved of.

Jose Ferrer underplays the dwarfed artist in a way that is effective without being repulsive. Lautrec's physical ugliness is in vivid contrast to the good pictures he paints and the beautiful women who surround him. Colette Marchand gives an outstanding performance as a prostitute who treated Lautrec shabbily. And Suzanne Flon is extraordinarily lovely as Myriamme, a woman who could have helped the cynical, unhappy artist if only he had let her.

MOVIEGOERS who like their films more heady than fluidly cinematic will find "Face to Face" worth their while. This two-part picture, produced by Huntington Hartford, an A & P heir who is no longer limiting his package deals to the grocery store, opens with a moody Joseph Conrad story about an insecure, untried ship captain who not only has to maneuver his ship through perilous waters but also has to judge the mate of another ship who killed a sailor and is asking for help in escaping. "The Secret Sharer" has the kind of a double and symbolic problem that Conrad handles so well. John Brahm's direction of the script is a bit static at times, but the suspense is good and James Mason's performance as the captain is excellent. One might wish that this captain would stop playing God, but the argument is really with Conrad, not with the movie, which is definitely provocative.

The second half of this double bill is a sort of parody on our Westerns as we know them now, but was just an amusing short story when originally written by Stephen Crane as "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." Its plot concerns a sheriff (Robert Preston) who finds when he returns with his bride to the small Texas town to which he has brought law and order that the local drunk (Minor Watson) is shooting up the place. Bretaigne Windust's direction of the script by James Agee is rather slow and arty, but the piece has a lot of fun and it respects your intelligence. It has special interest because Agee appears in it and does right well in a supporting role. I always wondered what happened to movie critics after they retired.

WHAT happens to actresses when they should retire but don't is the subject of Bette Davis's new film. Actually "The Star" should have been a good movie, considering Bette Davis's ability to emote all over the place and her willingness to make herself look awful when the script so demands. But unfortunately the script in this case is a pretty cheesy affair with unbelievable lines and a final solution that is hardly in keeping with the characterization to which the film stuck during most of its running time.

Perhaps "The Star" is a woman's picture, one that will appeal to audiences who enjoy seeing women suffer and suffer—no matter how much the heroine might deserve what she gets. But I found myself responding to it only when Bette Davis was carrying on in the grand style and when she came out with a caustic crack about the city of my birth: "What else is there to do in Chicago between trains but take a bath at the Blackstone and go to Marshall Field's?"

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

SHADOWS OF TOMORROW

Sunnyside, Wash.

TO the Editor: As the writer of the controversial article "Shadows of Tomorrow" [Jan. 2] I claim the right to correct a few impressions. Although the judgment of Hannah Arendt, who has shown such ample proof of her qualifications, might offset some of the observations of my most severe critics, I still feel that the readers of The Commonweal should not have my thesis smothered by the sheer mass of words

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of my critics. As far as I can see the editors have taken a stand against my article, which they accepted reluctantly.

Miss Kahn, in my opinion, has associated with the kind of people who would seek her out even had she lived there twice as long as she did. She cites exceptional people and I have no doubt of what this elite said and did. The question is: do they amount to anything? I am not going into what caused it all, but I gave in my report a picture that forced itself on me after contacts which were not selective, but was built on the fact that the people I met were many of the same people I had met in the past, and many of them were anti-Nazi to a certain degree.

The outcome of this observation is clear, whether we are forgiving, non-forgiving, pro- or anti-German: a tremendous surge of disaffection, bordering on contempt, almost hatred. We are dealing with a fact, not with what we think of it. I wish to overstate my thesis: while there is no sympathy with Russia, where I was, the West has lost Germany by default, in spite of the generous help we have given the Germans and the general good will we have shown them. None of my critics goes further than to say: it can't be true, it is impossible. I am particularly astonished at the statement that the exchange worked well. Where and how? The many exchange personnel I met here and in Germany convinced me that they were convinced that there was very little to learn in the U.S. and very much to criticize.

Where is that anti-German press in this country that cries vengeance? Where did I say that all Germans believe they are supermen? That most of them believe they are "superior" can only be denied by someone giving proof to the contrary of what I had to listen to from the French zone to the Soviet border. My critics are certainly more kind-hearted in their interpretation of Germans and their remarks than of me. Instead of giving the impression that I was prompted by revenge, they could have used the same amount of charity accorded Germans in Germany and detected a note of sorrow at the unbelievable hardening that came about. Miss Kahn's advice to work at the re-Christianizing of Germany has to be translated into realistic terms, which means that all the Germans I met felt that they *were* good Christians and had their doubts about others, like us, and it also means that part of this job is to make them see that their global condemnation of the victors demands that they assume a bit of responsibility for their own recent past. May I add that the people I met and talked to were in no way to be called, as Miss Kahn implies, a "lunatic fringe of the Klan or Communist variety": they were bishops, priests, civil servants, business men, physicians, housewives, radio broadcasters, writers, monks, taxi-drivers—unless I am totally deranged in my judgment, they were all of the nice, quiet, well-educated variety; people among whom I grew up and with whom I lived. Come to think of it: I completely missed the crowd that makes the headlines, like General Ramcke, or the inhabitants of Aurich, who threatened to lynch their mayor for reporting the presence of a notorious escaped war criminal, and their ilk.

Nazism as such may be gone. Reading scores of magazines from Germany and having spoken to unselected specimens, average citizens, high and low, I still am appalled at our naive attitude which even now does not see that "Barkis is not willin'." The carping and contemptuous treatment meted out to the victors by the Germans I met, or read, shows exactly what I said: that they will refuse to become a part of the West. We had better accept facts, encourage the few whom Miss Kahn met, but be aware that, whatever the causes are, correctible or irremediable, intellectually and morally what is behind Adenauer's back is so far no reliable ally of the West.

(Rev.) H. A. Reinhold.

SOCIALISM IN TRANSITION

White Plains, N. Y.

To the Editors: Reading Michael Harrington's "Socialism in Transition" [Jan. 23] gives one the eerie feeling of watching a sunrise and hearing someone nearby declaim, "See the fried egg hanging on the wall."

The extreme disinterest of Americans in socialism is no doubt distressing, and The Commonweal has the useful function of enabling socialists to reassure each other that, if lonely, they are at any rate right. (See also The Commonweal post-election editorial accounting for Eisenhower's victory on the basis of subintellectual emotional compulsions in 55 per cent of the electorate.)

So it is necessary to scold the indifferent into thinking the Right Thoughts: ". . . positively, Catholics must take notice of, and participate in" developments in the democratic socialist movement. Positively! Thus warned, we must hide Cardinal Mercier's Manual of Scholastic Philosophy, and its declaration that "Collectivism is incompatible, both theoretically and practically, with the liberty and dignity of the human person."

Because the American Economy is working so admirably (on a relative scale, of course) Mr. Harrington, to provide a *raison d'écrire,* is compelled to recite that "the contradictions of capitalism, left basically unsolved" [because *by definition* the only basic solution is socialism] "are still with us," and that "American capitalism never recovered from the great collapse of the thirties." Sad, sad.

The socialist chant is that "America is the last cap-

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italist state to reach maturity." What's that again? Mature? Never heard of it. What's mature about a nation which is operating 133 per cent above the 1935-39 level, where, because research and engineering development and investment of capital are so vigorous, output per man-hour is increasing 5 per cent per year? And, we might add, where so much creativity of the human personality has been liberated for the democratic satisfaction of human needs that leisure and income are left over in such abundance that we support more symphony orchestras than all the rest of the world—and, like as not, more free journals of opinion.

To provide a scale against which to measure the American operating achievement, recall the jubilation when, with Marshall Plan aid, European production was pushed to 40 per cent above pre-war.

Mr. Harrington makes much of the belated discovery of some English socialists that managerial society is the chief enemy of human freedom today, that what we have to do is to distribute responsibility and to enlarge freedom of choice. That's no recommendation of their perspicacity. Why defer to a doctor who, at the age of sixty, finally tumbles to the necessity of antisepsis?

That's what we reactionaries have been saying all along. That's why we've said socialism is unacceptable. That's why we have kept working with and on the system of private property, experimenting, studying, changing, viewing with alarm, figuring, legislating. It's sunrise, after all, and sky.

VICTOR VON SZELISKI.

"THE COMMON GOOD"

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: There will be ever so many men who will hasten with gratitude, as I do, to hail the superb article by Bishop Wright on "The Common Good" which you published (December 26, 1952). This is a voice and an appeal of superior wisdom to which, God grant, many more will listen in this time of crisis when the spirit of suspicion and rancor, when the divisive voices, the nuisances, of the extremes of the Left and the Right still press so articulately upon our public life.

It will indeed be a day of joy when a "Vital Center" becomes visible before the nation. And if it takes as its rallying point the existential common good, moving a little to the Left or a little to the Right as the existing situation demands, it will have done much to destroy the validity of all purely partisan ideologies on either side. In fact, the day may come when the words "Left" and "Right" may no longer make any sense at all, when all sane men will ask only what the need of the national moment is—whether the need be one of boldness or of caution. Then we would be talking the language of a political philosophy which Saint Thomas would surely have been the first to espouse. At any rate, without such a language and vision we shall be constantly caught up, as the Bishop indicates, in the whirling passions of the extremists and involved in their mutual recriminations.

One could say many other things about this remarkable article. Suffice it to say in brief that Bishop Wright has spoken with the high and unifying wisdom of the Catholic spirit at its best.

(Rev.) WILLIAM F. LYNCH, S.J.
Editor, *Thought*

"SPIES OR SCAPEGOATS"

Cambridge, Mass.

TO the Editors: While I am in substantial agreement with the position taken in your discussion of the Lattimore case [Jan. 2] I hope it would not be picayune to question the statement, "If Owen Lattimore is guilty of espionage and conspiracy, he should be convicted on that score, not for less important discrepancies in his testimony."

Since the trial of Alger Hiss, a case in which the offense charged was perjury but in which the matter of the perjured testimony concerned espionage activity, there has been a tendency to lose sight of the fact that perjury in itself is a serious crime. Attention has been concentrated on the graver offences of espionage for which Mr. Hiss was not directly liable to punishment because of the bar of the statute of limitations.

In the case of Professor Lattimore, it is quite possible that he may not have been guilty of either espionage or conspiracy, that his activities may have been only concerned with promoting a climate of opinion favorable to Soviet policies and ambitions, violations of a code of scholarship or of morals, but not of any code of law. In that event, while his activities might be beyond the reach of the criminal code, they are not beyond the interest of a Congressional investigating committee. Such a committee has a sound reason and full right to question Professor Lattimore, under oath, on these activities and on his motives, admittedly non-criminal, in so acting. Professor Lattimore was under the obligation of any citizen to answer such questions truthfully. Minor discrepancies of memory as to time and place of events of a decade ago should certainly not be the grounds for criminal punishment. But if Professor Lattimore denies that he was ever a conscious instrument of Soviet policy and the facts adduced show that he was in fact, then no person should properly quarrel with a conviction and punishment for perjury. To be a fellow-traveller may in itself be neither espionage nor conspiracy; to falsely deny (under oath) that one knowingly has been so is a crime, and a

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very serious one. However much we may disagree with the conduct and motives of individual Congressmen in the course of investigations, the instrument of an information-gathering committee is vital to any legislative process. Such committees can only operate if they possess the power to elicit sworn testimony and punish perjury.

The October, 1952, issue of *The Twentieth Century* contains an article "Ordeal by Mendacity" by Irving Kristol, a former editor of *Commentary*. It would seem to indicate that Professor Lattimore has been something less than frank in his denial that he consciously advanced the Soviet line in his editorial direction of *Pacific Affairs*. If it be determined that this is the case, then despite the fact that such acts in themselves constituted neither espionage nor conspiracy, a punishment for perjury would be eminently justified. We have too long considered perjury as a legal device by which more serious acts could be reached by the criminal process; we are in danger of forgetting that it is a significant crime in itself, and that perjury, even though it may be concerned with non-criminal matters, is nonetheless perjury.

BRIAN BUCKLEY.

A SKETCH

The Landlady Came With the House

MARJORIE CROWE HUGHES

DURING the war years we rented a house in a small city in upstate New York. Some friends of ours had purchased an old farmhouse in the hills near Binghamton for only nine hundred dollars, and lyrical letters from them assured us we could do likewise since many farmers owned, besides their homestead land, an extra farm, and now that there were high wages to be had in the war industries they were getting rid of the extra places for prices so low as to be unheard of since depression days.

At that time we were living in the perpetual twilight of two rooms on the ground floor rear of an ancient tenement on New York's east side. We had the world's most extraordinary baby, another on the way, five hundred dollars and the urge to get back to the land which is common to slum dwellers, merchant seamen and a good many admiring readers of Cobbett, Chesterton and Gill.

To this day I don't know what the city of Binghamton looks like on a map. In my mind its streets go out in various directions like the spokes of a wheel from the center which is the Greyhound bus station. I know every detail of that station, and I should. We all but lived there for several days. It was the best base for operations we could think of. We became part of the lives of the workers there. After our third meal in the restaurant they began setting up a high chair for the baby at eleven o'clock every morning.

It took all of one day to dispose of the farm agencies. We took turns in the morning minding the baby and calling up the agents we had marked on the catalogue. They all had the same report to make. There were no more cheap farms. There had been a few months ago but not now; they were sold. If we could pay a thousand down—. We couldn't. In the afternoon we telephoned all the farm agencies listed in the local newspapers and the classified section of the phone book. No one was listing cheap farms.

However, we weren't too discouraged. We reasoned that cheap farms wouldn't be likely to be listed anyhow. After you got to know your way around a given area you would hear about farms for sale or see them advertised occasionally in a newspaper, or discover them by driving around the countryside on a Sunday afternoon. We decided to rent a house for the fall and winter and get our farm the next spring. It seemed like a sensible solution. We took the next Greyhound home to Grandma's. They ran every two hours.

IT wouldn't be quite true to say that in the whole city of Binghamton there was no house for rent. There were a few but none of them rented for fifty a month or less. We spent days tramping the streets, following every lead, answering every ad. We were advised to try smaller communities near the city so we began making lists of them. Every day we boarded a bus from Binghamton to as many of them as we could cover. Three villages a day was about par.

Nearly a month went by in this fashion and a couple of hundred dollars with it. The baby was due in October; we were putting quite a strain on family hospitality. In short, the situation was getting rather desperate. As an economy measure we began house hunting sep-

Mrs. Hughes is a free-lance writer whose present home is at Maryvale, Chemung, N. Y.

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arately so I was alone the day the house finally turned up.

It was six in the afternoon and I was on my way home after another long, fruitless expedition. The bus was going through the business district of a small city and I was gazing idly out the window. On a side street I saw two houses incongruously tucked in between a gasoline station and a smallish factory. One was large enough to have been a hotel. The other was medium-sized, shabby, painted a dirty chocolate brown. There was a little patch of grass growing in front of the rickety porch. We had gone two blocks past it before I realized that there had been no curtains on the windows. I got off the bus, walked back and rented it from Rose Corsi, the owner, who was inside papering the front room.

We spent a year in that house so I have a lot of memories of Rose Corsi. That first day I thought she was charming in a rather primitive sort of way. She was a small woman with great burning eyes and a nervous energy which never allowed her to sit or even stand still. She wasn't sure she wanted to rent the house and while we talked she kept darting around the room, interspersing questions about us with information about her own family. It turned out that we had both lived on Mulberry Street in New York City at one time or another, and I think that was what decided her to rent the house to us rather than making a rooming house of it, which is what she had in mind. This and the fact that a baby was coming. Rose Corsi loved babies.

She charged us four dollars a month more than the rent set by the OPA for the house but since the total came to twenty-six dollars a month we still had a bargain, we thought. We moved in that very week and my husband spent several days before getting a job making necessary repairs and getting the house insulated for winter, with Rose dogging his footsteps every moment she wasn't at work. It added up to a lot of moments, and she didn't even have to spend any time getting back and forth from where she lived as her tiny house was located literally in our back yard.

She was very disappointed when we bought our furniture from the second-hand store instead of from her. When she learned that we needed some beds she eagerly led me into her front room saying that she had plenty left over from the days when she ran a rooming house and I could have them for five dollars each. The room was jammed with old-fashioned arm chairs so that one could scarcely turn around. "Where are the beds?" I inquired politely. It seemed that the armchairs were beds. During the depression the roomers had slept in them and not complained. Twenty-five cents a night she charged them. I could see she thought I was a proud piece indeed. When I explained that they wouldn't do she sniffed scornfully and actually refrained from accompanying me back into what was theoretically my house.

ROSE had a job two blocks away at the town's one big hotel. She worked there as chambermaid from noon until six o'clock every day. Though she owned both her houses and had bank accounts in three countries she saw no reason for retiring when there was perfectly good money to be made.

The bank accounts were in the United States, France and Italy, on the premise, I suppose, of not putting all your eggs in one basket. When she came home from work at night during the spring and fall she chopped up old crates she had picked up on the street and burned the pieces in the ancient coal stove on which she cooked a meager supper composed for the most part of vegetables she had grown in a tiny garden at the side of her house.

She was an ascetic for the love of money and just as fervent as any Italian mystic about her god. "You folks must have lots of money," she said to me once with a sly smile. "Look—you never go out and spend any like other people do. You just read and write in the evening. And you hardly ever buy any clothes. You must have lots saved." I knew how she kept tabs on our evenings, having caught glimpses of the her face peering in our windows on more nights than one.

When the weather got really cold she left her house and job for a couple of months and lived with her daughter on Mulberry Street. "I make artificial flowers at home while I'm there," she told me, "so I still save just as much. No coal or food to pay for. Only I'm always afraid the pipes in my house will freeze while I'm gone. Maybe your husband would come and drain them out for me?"

Every morning Rose rushed off to church at seven o'clock. From behind she looked like a very young woman. Her figure was firm, slender and shapely though she was past sixty-five. So swiftly did she move that one had the impression she was being blown along by a wind of hurricane force. She made me vaguely uneasy with her youthful look and tremendous energy. I remember thinking that there were times in history when she would have been burned as a witch.

When she talked to anyone she did a queer little dance to the rhythm of the words she spoke. It was something like the basic step they teach you in ballroom dancing, where you describe an imaginary square on the floor; forward on the right foot, close; left with the left foot, close; back with the left foot, close; then right with the right foot, close. Only she did it springily, bending her knees at a sort of angle and bobbing up and down. She interrupted this little dance only when she wanted to act something out or give extra emphasis to a remark.

Often she stopped in after church to see what I might have done to her house since the day before and to tell me her latest religious dream. She had about two a week. They were always very dramatic. "I was in this

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room, near the door, and I heard a big noise like something knocking down the door, like this—" she interrupted her dance long enough to seize an imaginary log and ram it at the door. "Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! a big noise. So I opened the door. There was Christ on the cross. The cross was big, big! The arms of it were what made the noise trying to open the door. I looked at Him. He looked at me. I reached up my arms and He came off the cross and embraced me. I could feel His lips on my lips and His bare teeth on mine." She shuddered. "I'm going to tell the priest." My heart went out in sympathy to her long-suffering confessor.

I had one other neighbor that year, the occupant of the hotel-like house next to ours. She was an elderly lady who puttered about her yard most of the day and came to visit me quite often. Once she had been wealthy, according to Rose, but she had spent all her money riotously and now she just scraped along. She wore the oldest clothes, clothes from the nineties, rusty and dirtier if possible than Felicity herself was. She had white hair, an intelligent and not unattractive face and she was quite mad. In the middle of a sentence she would break off with no warning and chant a psalm. Much of her conversation was incoherent but in between I managed to learn a good deal about herbs from her, and heard a lot of the ways people had of managing when she was a girl. When she had to go downtown where people would see her she would deliberately smear herself with coal dust and ashes. At any time of day or night one was likely to hear her chuckling and talking to herself.

There was a romantic story about Felicity. She was supposed to have been the most beautiful girl in a old and well-to-do family. Her fiance had died only a few days before their marriage date and left her a fortune in his will. She flung the money away senselessly, foolishly, Rose said, as though she couldn't get rid of it fast enough and she'd been queer ever since.

This alone was enough to arouse Rose's wrath against the forlorn woman, but she claimed to have further cause. "When we were younger," she told me, "and my last husband was alive, I came home one day and found him and Felicity together. They were drunk on my wine and they were kissing. I broke a bottle over her head. I knocked her out good. And you know what? Still she talks to me when she sees me." She looked over at the big house contemptuously. "Look, would you speak to someone who hit you over the head with a bottle? I wouldn't never speak to them again if it was me."

EVENTUALLY I took to doing my morning's work on the back porch. This cut down the time of Rose's visits considerably and had the added advantage of giving her a bigger area (the yard) in which to practice her rubber-kneed accompaniment to our conversation. It was in the yard that she warned me about the Irish.

"What's your husband?" she asked me one day. "He's Irish, ain't he?" She knew right well he was Irish as she had inquired before, but I nodded pleasantly enough. "Well let me warn you. Never trust the Irish!" This was said in such an emphatic tone that I couldn't resist asking why the Irish were especially untrustworthy.

"I'll tell you." she said. "It was when I had a grocery store. I was married to Louie. He was my second husband, Louie. Every year after Christmas I used to go in the stores and buy the broken toys cheap. Then I would put my kids and some of the other kids from the neighborhood in the room in back and give them some sandwiches and the toys and lock the door. They played all day in there so I could run the store.

"This was in America. My first husband was my cousin from another village in Italy and he promised to take me to America if I married him. Another fellow I liked wanted to marry me, from my own village, but he wouldn't go to America so I married Tony. We lied to the priest about being cousins. So after a while he died and I married Louie. We had the store, a kind of candy and grocery store. I've had three stores and always sold them at a profit.

"One night a man came, an older man. He stayed about half an hour looking and buying candy and cigars and looking at me but not too fresh." She smiled virtuously. "I wasn't that kind of woman. So when he finally paid he pulled out a big roll of bills to pay for it. He was a good spender, never less than a dollar. Every night he used to come and buy and smile at me.

"So Louie had this friend. He was Irish, the friend. You couldn't trust him. One night he was there when the man came and afterwards he said, 'Rose, who's the old guy?' I told him he's strange, no one knows him but he comes every night and every night he pays from the big roll. So Louie's friend, the Irishman says, 'Rose, suppose he should stumble some night and hit his head on the curb who'd know the difference? He's strange and he's old!'

"So I said, come on Louie, let's do it. Louie could stand behind the door some night. He wouldn't know what happened to him. But Louie wasn't like me. I'm quick. Louie was slow. 'No Rose,' he says, 'First I find out about the man.'

"And you know what?" she asked dramatically, stopping dead still in the dance, her eyes flashing, "You know who that old man was? An ex-cop. Retired. You know how cops are. Anything happened to him they wouldn't rest. Look at the trouble I would have had on account of Louie's friend." She shook her head indignantly. "You remember what I tell you. Never trust the Irish."

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The Triumph and Tragedy of a Spoiled Priest

HADRIAN THE SEVENTH. By Frederick Baron Corvo. Knopf. $3.50.

By WILLIAM P. CLANCY

IN September, 1913, Frederick Rolfe, alias Frederick Baron Corvo, destitute and dissolute in Venice, sent a last desperate appeal to one of his long-suffering, much abused benefactors in England: "My dear man: I'm in an awful state; and I firmly believe that I'm finished if I don't get relief *instanter*. . . . My dear man, I am so awfully lonely. And tired. Is there no way of setting me straight?"

There was, tragically, no way. Rolfe's physical, moral, and artistic credit, as well as his economic, was long since hopelessly exhausted. In October, 1913, alone, insolvent, and embittered, he died in his Venetian rooming house. There were few who noticed, and to those who did it must have seemed that, at fifty-four, he had already lived too long.

But in the best romantic tradition that genius dead is more appreciated than genius living, Frederick Rolfe's nagging misfortune has not followed him to the grave. He has been remembered and celebrated by a small but devout cult of admirers who have found in his extant works, especially the *Chronicles of the House of Borgia,* and *Hadrian The Seventh,* fare rich enough to excite the most exacting taste.

It was of *Hadrian The Seventh,* for example, that D. H. Lawrence wrote: "This book remains a clear and definite book of our epoch, not to be swept aside. If it is the book of a demon, as [Rolfe's] contemporaries said, it is the book of a man demon, not a mere poseur. And if some of it is caviare, it at least came out of the belly of a live fish." Now, re-issued in a handsome new edition, it may at last receive the audience it deserves. For, although *Hadrian* can never be every man's book, it remains one of the most remarkable novels of this century, a *roman à clef* perhaps unparalleled for its special qualities of brilliantly opinionated insight, ironically self-critical apologia, and basically religious irreverence. Its hero, George Arthur Rose, declares: "As for the Faith, I found it comfortable. As for the Faithful, I found them intolerable." The story of his sudden and fantastic emergence from impoverished obscurity to the Supreme Pontificate of the Holy Roman Church is essentially the idealized autobiography of Rolfe himself. It is his terrible vengeance on the Faithful—and his shy tribute to the Faith.

Frederick Rolfe was the European "spoiled priest" *par excellence.* A convert to Catholicism, he studied briefly for the priesthood at the Scots' College in Rome. Then, expelled for what we can easily believe to have been obvious temperamen-

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the frequent suggestions we are making to help send Medical Mission Kits to missionaries, you may have the satisfaction of knowing that many suffering bodies and darkened souls have been helped and healed through your generosity. By giving $30, or whatever part of it you can afford, you can renew this saving mercy for the most wretched and distressed of mankind. Send your contributions to Rev. Edward F. Garesche, S.J., President, Catholic Medical Mission Board, 10 West 17th Street, New York 11, N. Y.

COMMUNISM

The February issue of BLACKFRIARS will be devoted to the subject of Communism and will consist of lectures delivered at the Conference sponsored by the Newman Association, held in London in December 1952. The number will comprise approx. 72pp. Copies will be limited and if you are not a regular subscriber to BLACKFRIARS please book your order without delay. The contents will include:

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by Rev. Fr. D. J. B. Hawkins, D.D., and Very Rev. Fr. Ian Hislop, O.P., Ph.D.

The Economic Aspect of Communism
by H. R. Brech of *The Economist*

The Communist View of Science
by R. H. Richens, M.A.

Communism in Soviet Russia Today
by Sir David Kelly, GCMG, M.C., lately H.M. Ambassador in Moscow

The number will also include contributions by other speakers at the Conference, including Richard O'Sullivan, Q.C., and Douglas Hyde.

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tal inadequacies, he spent his life nourishing both his longing for Holy Orders and his paranoiac resentment of those whose obduracy denied them to him. A grotesque combination of rococo temperament and gothic facade, he seemed incapable of the normally admirable human emotions. His constitutional inability to love or to be loved left him a tortured eccentric. A man of genius and longing, forever unrecognized and unsatisfied, he vented his wrath on all who came near him. But if the waste of greatness is the secret of tragedy, a part, at least, of the enduring significance of *Hadrian The Seventh* lies in its evidence of how much genius was wasted in the real life of Frederick Rolfe.

For *Hadrian The Seventh* is Frederick Rolfe's dream of what his life might, and, we can be sure, in his view should, have been. It is his "If I Were Pope." And although we may be grateful that the Seminary Fathers squelched whatever wild chance there ever was that a future Father Frederick Rolfe might someday actually reign as a Hadrian the Seventh, we must yet sorrow that, as a result of their wisdom, so much was lost.

George Arthur Rose, in the Prooimion to *Hadrian The Seventh,* is spending one of his typical days: alone in his room, he intermittently broods, reads, writes, prays, talks to his cat, and counts "the split infinitives in the day's *Pall Mall Gazette.*" Upon this scene enter two prelates, the "Bishop of Caerleon" and the aged "Cardinal-Archbishop of Pimlico." They have come to right an ancient wrong by begging George Arthur Rose to accept the Holy Orders long denied him. He condescendingly accepts their offer of immediate ordination, but only after they promise to pay off all of his creditors themselves.

Soon afterwards, through a chain of wildly implausible circumstances made somehow credible by Rolfe, the much wronged Mr. Rose is elected to the See of Peter. He immediately established the flavor of his reign:

"They brought Him before the altar; and set Him in a crimson velvet chair, asking what pontifical name He would choose.

" 'Hadrian The Seventh'; the response came unhesitatingly, undemonstratively.

" 'Your Holiness would perhaps prefer to be called Leo, or Pius, or Gregory, as is the modern manner?' the Cardinal-Dean inquired with imperious suavity.

" 'The previous English pontiff was Hadrian the Fourth: the present English pontiff is Hadrian the Seventh. It pleases Us; and so, by Our Own Impulse, We command.' "

The irrepressible and enigmatic Hadrian then proceeds, during a short reign, to remake the Church —and the world. He encounters, not unnaturally, some opposition, but all eventually yields before his learning, wisdom, subtlety, and strength. He creates most of his friends Cardinals (thus "packing" the Sacred College). He sells the temporal treasures of the Church and distributes their proceeds to the poor. He humbles the proud Jesuits, and exalts the lowly Franciscans. He renounces the

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Church's claim to temporal sovereignty.

Cardinal Ragna, his arch-enemy, threatens to denounce him as "pseudopontiff and heretic" because of all this, but even the wily Ragna must finally cower before Hadrian's superiority. Hadrian denounces "Socialism" and the hated myth of "equality" and, as the acknowledged Father of Kings and Princes, restores the full glory of the Holy Roman Empire. Finally, while walking in procession through the streets of Rome, supported on one side by the Northern Emperor and on the other by the Southern, he is shot by a Socialist fanatic.

"The Apostle raised Himself a little, supported by imperial hands. How bright the sunlight was, on the warm grey stones, on the ripe Roman skins, on vermillion and lavender and blue and ermine and green and gold, on the indecent grotesque blackness of two blotches, on apostolic whiteness and the rose of blood . . ."

Hadrian intoned his Apostolic Blessing for the city and the world, then:

"The hand and the dark eyelashes drooped and fell. The delicate fastidious lips closed, in the ineffable smile of the dead who have found out the Secret of Love, and are perfectly satisfied.

"So died Hadrian The Seventh, Bishop, Servant of the servants of God, and (some say) Martyr. So died Peter in the arms of Caesar.

"The world sobbed, sighed, wiped its mouth, and experienced extreme relief."

And the final words Frederick Rolfe, alias Frederick Baron Corvo, wrote of his ego-hero might well be the words finally written of him:

"Pray for the repose of His soul. He was so tired."

The Word

A COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS. By Ronald Knox. Sheed & Ward. $3.75.

By DAVID HURST

IN HIS earlier days Monsignor Knox enjoyed himself and entertained others in cleverly poking fun at the extreme literary and scriptural critics of the past generation. He wrote in 1911: "If there is anything pleasant in criticism, it is finding out what we aren't meant to find out. It is the method by which we treat as significant what the author did not mean to be significant, by which we single out as essential what the author regarded as incidental. Thus . . . we sift and winnow the Gospel of St. Luke, in order to produce a Synoptic problem, because St. Luke, poor man, never knew the Synoptic problem to exist."

Now he has himself succumbed to a great extent to the temptation (irresistible, it must be allowed) of trying to reconcile the multiplicity of seeming contradictions in the sacred narrative of Christ's life and words. This impairs somewhat the effectiveness of his commentary. Nothing new would seem to have been added to the exhaustive commentaries of LaGrange; and yet one must be grateful that the fruits of his and others' scholarship have been made available to readers in English at a price people will not find prohibitive.

Granted the undeniable value of clarifying problems of parallel passages, chronology, textual variants, and the like, could not this knowledge be combined with a deeper understanding of the full import of the Gospels? There is a question as to whether the normal practicing Catholic—to say nothing of the unbeliever—will find a commentary such as the present one spiritually invigorating.

Doubtless Monsignor Knox's forthcoming commentary on the remainder of the New Testament will prove to be more inspiring in the same way that his translation of St. Paul's Epistles is more felicitous than that of the Gospels. In a practical vein, might it also be suggested to the publishers that a single volume containing the entire New Testament, with the text on one side and the commentary opposite, would make a much more useful volume? Perhaps such an arrangement would necessitate a judicious abbreviation of some of the notes in Monsignor Knox's commentary.

Life Down Under

THE WITCH'S THORN. By Ruth Park. Houghton Mifflin. $1.50.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

A REALLY canny reader, or one abnormally gifted with the simple faith of little children, or one whose disbelief had been trussed up into permanent suspension—any of these might have been prepared to believe in advance that the disparate elements of this story might make a good novel.

Most of us, a skeptical crew at best, would have wondered. The elements include an illegitimate-child heroine, a handful of Irish and German expatriates in New Zealand, a moth-eaten Irish tenor, a minor incest motif, an earthquake, an aged cannibal, a shellshocked veteran of World War I, several ladies of joy, and a set of beautiful, rather simple-minded Maoris.

Surprisingly, then, out of these strands Mrs. Park has woven a good book. The weave is a loose one, and the effect is sometimes that of a collection of anecdotes and character sketches; but the characters are persuasive, the happenings funny and/or sad in a direct, unacademic way, and the thread of narrative, though sometimes strained, holds together.

Bethel Jury is left almost alone when her sturdy Irish grandmother takes to her death bed. Grandma Jury's best friend in the world is the parish priest, and it is Father Finn who sees Bethel farmed out to her Aunt Amy and a series of other relatives, in turn, only to discover, to his considerable grief, that among all these good people nobody wants Bethel.

Bethel is brought at last among warm-hearted people—a Maori family and a mother of thirteen illegitimate children—but leaves their cheerful companionship for her father's roof. Among the several undesirable roofs in Te Kano, Johnny Gow's is easily the worst, and since Bethel is a courageous and believable child, it is a great relief when her oddly assorted friends rescue her.

There is a happy ending, and not at all of the American-slick variety;

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that is to say, there are no movie contracts, unexpected legacies, scholarships from the local school, or other such bric-a-brac about. There is only fat Georgie Wi and his deaf-mute wife Maria, who sacrifice their reputation with the whites, including Father Finn, to adopt Bethel permanently.

With so large a cast of uncommon characters, it is remarkable that Mrs. Park has avoided typing them. Each, even the senile old cannibal (for American readers, certainly the least-likely-to-be-credible man of the year), is a person. In the people, the unfamiliar setting, the difficult handling of Catholicism as neither cant nor pretty-pretty pietism, there is the stamp of truth. *The Witch's Thorn* is no great novel, to be sure, but it is a very good one.

REVIEWERS

Dom David Hurst, O.S.B., is a monk of Portsmouth Priory.

Jean Holzhauer is a regular contributor to The Commonweal.

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—Gerald Vann, O.P., in The Commonweal
February 23, 1951

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